

Module 8



PRODUCE AND PESTICIDES

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We all know that fruits and vegetables are good for us and contain beneficial vitamins, minerals, and anti-inflammatory compounds. There is also extensive research showing that fruit and vegetable consumption is associated with healthy aging and a reduced risk for chronic diseases. Because of this, many are making an effort to include more of these nutritious foods in our diets.

As we try to eat more fruits and vegetables daily, we may want to consider how the produce was grown and whether or not it contains pesticides. Being aware of which foods are more likely to contain pesticides can help guide our shopping decisions and ensure we're not only eating a nutritious diet that includes a variety of fruits and veggies but also limiting our exposure to unnatural chemicals.



HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH PESTICIDES

It is estimated that nearly six billion pounds of pesticides are used throughout the globe each year, potentially contaminating our food, air, and water.¹ Their existence in our environment has been linked to the following health problems:



Hormone disruption



Skin, eye, and lung irritation



Brain and nervous system toxicity

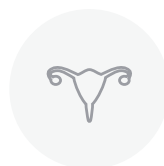


Cancer

Possible chronic effects from repeated exposure to pesticides include:



Blood disorders



Reproductive effects



Nerve disorders



Birth defects

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Those who regularly eat food grown with pesticides and those who live downwind or downstream of sprayed crops have the highest risk of developing health problems. Infants and young children are also at risk since their bodies are still developing.

Children living in areas with heavy pesticides have been shown to develop²:

- Impaired hand-eye coordination
- Decreased physical stamina
- Short-term memory impairment
- Trouble drawing



LIVING ORGANIC

According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG), even after properly washing produce, pesticides still remain. In fact, the EWG's annual report on the Dirty Dozen found up to 20 different pesticides on a single strawberry and the three most toxic pesticides in concerning levels on hot peppers.³

Choosing organic foods can help reduce exposure to chemicals that may disrupt our bodies' natural rhythms. Organic practices also help to support the planet through utilizing more sustainable methods and relying less on chemicals to limit pests.

Organic⁴:

of, relating to, yielding, or involving the use of food produced with the use of feed or fertilizer of plant or animal origin without employment of chemically formulated fertilizers, growth stimulants, antibiotics, or pesticides

FARMING BEST PRACTICES



Organic: Raising crops au naturel



Balanced soil: Using crop rotation instead of chemicals to improve soil fertility



Sustainable farming: Repurposing manure as an organic fertilizer, contributing to the health of the soil

Next time you hit your neighborhood farmers' market, check out the supply to find healthy choices for you and your family!

FOOTNOTES

- 1 | Alavanja, M. C. (2009). Pesticides use and exposure extensive worldwide. *Rev Environ Health* 24(4), 303–309.
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- 2 | Guillette, E. A., Meza, M. M., Aquilar, M. G., Soto, A. D., & Garcia, I. E. (1998). An anthropological approach to the evaluation of preschool children exposed to pesticides in Mexico. *Environ Health Perspect* 106(6), 347–353.
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- 3 | EWG’s 2018 shopper’s guide to pesticides in produce. (2018). *Environmental Working Group*.
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- 4 | Organic. 2019. In *Merriam-Webster.com*.
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